

REMARKS

Claims 24, 26 and 36 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by either one of Bryan et al. (U.S. 5,071,617) or Manson et al. (U.S. 4,772,447). Claims 28, 30, 31, 34, 35, 37, 39 and 40 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Manson et al. Claims 27 and 32 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over either one of Bryan et al. or Manson et al., as applied to claims 24, 26 and 36 in the Office Action and further in view of Grattier (U.S. 5,180,545). Claim 33 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over either one of Manson et al., as applied to claims 24, 26 and 36 in the Office Action and further in view of Grattier.

Claims 24 and 36 have been amended. New claims 47 and 48 have been added.

Reconsideration of the application based on the following remarks is respectfully requested.

35 U.S.C. §102 Rejections

Claims 24, 26 and 36 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by either one of Bryan et al. or Manson et al.

Applicants thank the examiner for the helpful suggestion on better defining the outer side, which is now recited as “the outer side being opposite the inner side.” To more particularly define the noses of the present invention, claims 24 and 26 have also been amended to recite “wherein the noses have an inner surface facing the fuel rods and an outer surface opposite the inner surface that converges to be narrower than the diameter of the fuel rods in a direction that is orientated towards the outer side of the end piece.” As shown clearly in the figures for example, the end pieces have outer surfaces that clearly converge to be narrower to than the diameter of the fuel rods. In fact, in the preferred embodiment, the noses converge to a point, as claimed in new claims 47 and 48.

In Bryan, the bosses 23 clearly do not have such an outer surface, as it is the inner surface facing the fuel rods that converges. Further, these bosses 23 are for receiving guide tubes 14 (see col.2, l. 67) and are therefore not in a longitudinal continuation of the guide tubes or the fuel rods as claimed.

Manson cannot have anything called noses that “converge to be narrower than the diameter of the fuel rods in a direction that is oriented towards the outer side of the end piece” as Manson requires that the fuel rods fit within its bands. Further the sleeve 90 receive the fuel rods and can therefore not be in a longitudinal continuation of the guide tubes or the fuel rods as claimed.

Withdrawal of the rejections of claims 24, 26 and 36 under 35 U.S.C. §102 as being anticipated by either one of Bryan et al. or Manson et al. is respectfully requested.

Claims 28, 30, 31, 34, 35, 37, 39 and 40 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Manson et al. In view of the above, withdrawal of the rejection of claims 28, 30, 31, 34, 35, 37, 39 and 40 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) is respectfully requested.

35 U.S.C. §103(a) Rejections

Claims 27 and 32 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over either one of Bryan et al. or Manson et al., as applied to claims 24, 26 and 36 above and further in view of Grattier (U.S. 5,180,545). In view of the above, withdrawal of the rejection of claims 27 and 32 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) is respectfully requested. Claim 33 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over either one of Manson et al., as applied to claims 24, 26 and 36 above and further in view of Grattier. In view of the above, withdrawal of the rejection of claims 33 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) is respectfully requested.

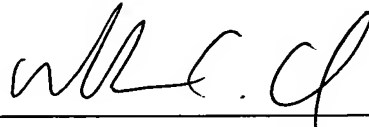
CONCLUSION

It is respectfully submitted that the application is in condition for allowance and applicants respectfully request such action.

If any additional fees are deemed to be due at this time, the Assistant Commissioner is authorized to charge payment of the same to Deposit Account No. 50-0552.

Respectfully submitted,

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